

Jones
Joyce (OH)
Katko
Kelly (MS)
Kind
King (IA)
Kinzinger
Knight
Kustoff (TN)
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Latta
Lewis (MN)
LoBiondo
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
MacArthur
Marchant
Marshall
Massie
Mast
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris
Rodgers
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mitchell
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Mullin
Murphy (PA)
Newhouse

NAYS—175

Adams
Aguilar
Barragán
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Blumenauer
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Boyle, Brendan
F.
Brady (PA)
Brown (MD)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capuano
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crist
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (CA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Demings
DeSaulnier
Dingell
Doggett
Donovan
Doyle, Michael
F.
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo

Noem
Nunes
Olson
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peterson
Pittenger
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Posey
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (SC)
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney, Francis
Rooney, Thomas
J.
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Royce (CA)
Russell
Rutherford
Sanford
Scalise
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuster

Simpson
Sinema
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smucker
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Taylor
Tenney
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Trott
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vela
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Walz
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Zeldin

Maloney,
Carolyn B.
Maloney, Sean
Matsui
McCollum
McEachin
McGovern
McNerney
Meeks
Meng
Moore
Moulton
Murphy (FL)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Nolan
Norcross
O'Halleran
O'Rourke
Pallone
Panetta
Pascrell
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters
Pingree
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Khanna
Kihuen
Kildee
Kilmer
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster (NH)
Lance
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
Loeb sack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowe y
Lujan Grisham,
M.
Luján, Ben Ray
Lynch

Suo zzi
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Titus
Tonko

NOT VOTING—14
Beyer
Collins (NY)
Conyers
Davis, Danny
Deutch
Jordan
Kelly (PA)
King (NY)
Marino
Palmer

□ 1805

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

IMPROVING AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO HIRE AND RETAIN PHYSICIANS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to insert any extraneous material into the RECORD on H.R. 1367.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 198 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1367.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1811

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, with Mr. BUDD in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 1367, to improve the authority of the Department of Veterans Affairs to recruit and retain employees.

VA's mission of honoring and serving our Nation's veterans is second to none in the Federal Government, and a high-quality, high-performing workforce is

key to VA's ability to successfully execute on that mission.

H.R. 1367 contains a number of provisions that would strengthen VA's ability to identify staffing shortages, recruit employees to fill vacant positions, quickly onboard new hires, and retain high-performing workers across the country. It also contains provisions that would improve leadership and accountability throughout VA and increase the number of veterans in the Federal workforce.

To assist VA in identifying and addressing local staffing deficiencies, this bill would modify the annual determination of staffing shortages to include five clinical occupations and five nonclinical occupations for each VA medical center. Staffing needs can vary significantly from facility to facility, even within the same State, and create a variety of delays, backlogs, and other challenges for veterans.

This provision would allow VA to use this existing reporting tool, which dates back to the 2014 Choice Act, to target a total of 10 occupations at each VA medical center and use VA's existing direct hire authority to expeditiously address shortages for those occupations.

To increase leadership development opportunities for emerging leaders and encourage the dissemination of best practices between and among VA and private sector, the bill would establish an executive management program to allow eligible VA and private sector employees the opportunity to take 1-year fellowship positions in either comparable private sector entities or VA, respectively. This idea was brought to us by a veteran participating in the joint Veterans of Foreign Wars-Student Veterans of America legislative fellowship program and would mirror a successful fellowship model used by the White House and the State Department.

To increase accountability for senior VA decisionmakers, the bill would require annual performance plans for VA political appointees, similar to the annual performance plans that are required for Senior Executive Service employees.

□ 1815

Like SES employees, political appointees perform at the very highest levels and play critical roles in setting and achieving high profile policies and priorities. It is only appropriate that they too be held accountable for their performance.

To incentivize the hiring of veterans across the Federal Government, the bill would change the service requirement for reservists and guardsmen to be eligible for veterans' preference from 180 days of consecutive Active-Duty service to 180 days of cumulative Active-Duty service, and expand those considered preference eligible to include all retired servicemembers.

Veterans gain a variety of skills during their time in uniform and are often

uniquely suited to Federal employment. In recognition of this, some form of veterans' preference has been in place since the Civil War. By modernizing this important benefit today, we can bring needed skill sets to the Federal workforce and promote employment opportunities for veterans, a win-win if there ever was one.

To encourage former VA employees who left VA service to gain relevant education or experience and then return to the VA, the bill would allow the VA to noncompetitively reappoint a former employee to a position not more than 1 grade higher than their former position.

I believe we must do everything possible to encourage former employees to come back and work at the VA and reward them for furthering themselves and using their new skills to benefit veterans.

In order to be eligible for reappointment under this authority, the former employee must have voluntarily, within the prior 2 years, maintained a satisfactory performance record while at the VA, and retained any necessary licensures or credentials.

To assist the VA in identifying and prioritizing vacancies, the bill would require the VA to establish a recruiting database listing each vacant position that the VA determines is critical to the VA's mission, is difficult to fill, or both.

Also, the bill would authorize and encourage the VA to track qualified applicants for vacant positions and use the recruiting database and the qualified applicant pool to quickly fill vacancies that have gone unfilled for a prolonged time.

To ensure the VA human resources professionals have a thorough understanding of the VA's unique hiring authorities, the bill would require Veterans Health Administration HR employees to receive regular, ongoing training.

The VA healthcare system benefits from direct hiring authorities for clinical personnel under title 38, United States Code. However, these hiring authorities are unique to the VA and can be complex and difficult for HR employees to understand and work with, which increases the likelihood that those authorities go underused and HR professionals experience burnout.

This provision would support those professionals in their important work while ensuring that veterans benefit as much as possible from the special hiring authorities that Congress has granted the VA in statute.

To encourage highly skilled employees wishing to advance in their career at the VA without taking on a management role, this bill would require the VA to establish a promotional track for technical experts that does not require transition to a managerial position. This is a commonsense provision that would increase the VA's ability to retain employees in highly technical positions who want to remain at the

VA and continue moving forward in their careers, but are either uninterested in or ill-suited to becoming a manager.

To increase the understanding of the VA's succession planning efforts, the bill would require the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on succession planning at each VA medical facility, as well as within the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration.

Earlier this week, the VA confirmed that 80 percent of current Veterans Integrated Service Network directors and 25 percent of current VA Medical Center directors are eligible to retire. Last year, the VA testified that it can take more than 6 months and multiple re-announcements to fill these important positions in both rural and major metropolitan areas.

Effective succession planning is critical to ensuring stable leadership and to identifying and developing emerging leaders who are ready, willing, and able to step up when existing directors or other managers retire or depart. I look forward to reviewing the results of GAO's work to see what further improvements can be made in this area.

To improve recruitment and retention of younger employees, the bill would require the VA to allow for excepted service appointments leading to conversion to career or career-conditional employment for students and recent graduates.

VA's existing workforce is aging and, as I mentioned just a moment ago, increasingly retirement-eligible. Unfortunately, the VA has historically performed poorly in comparison to other Federal agencies when it comes to hiring younger employees, which could put the VA's future at risk. I am hopeful that this provision will increase the VA's ability to build a pipeline of young talent.

Finally, to increase the VA's understanding of why departing employees choose to leave the VA and, in turn, how the VA could improve in order to retain other employees, this bill would require the VA to develop and deploy a standardized, anonymous exit survey process. The VA has an existing survey process but it is underutilized, with just 30 percent of all clinical employees completing it prior to their departure over the last 5 years, according to a GAO report issued last year.

Factors that contribute to employees voluntarily leaving VA service cannot be addressed unless they are identified, and this provision would help us do that.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the future of the VA, our Nation's second largest bureaucracy, depends on the VA's ability to effectively and efficiently recruit and retain highly qualified and motivated employees in towns and cities across this country. In an increasingly competitive market with an increasingly retirement-eligible workforce, the stakes are simply too high for the VA to continue to struggle to hire the employees it needs.

While more remains to be done to simplify and shorten the VA's hiring process and strengthen the VA's ability to bring the very best professionals onboard to serve our veterans, H.R. 1367 is the first step to ensuring a sufficient VA workforce is available to veterans for generations to come.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,

Washington, DC, March 10, 2017.

Hon. DAVID P. ROE,

Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write concerning H.R. 1367, "to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and for other purposes." As you know, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs received an original referral and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform a secondary referral when the bill was introduced on March 6, 2017. I recognize and appreciate your desire to bring this legislation before the House of Representatives in an expeditious manner, and accordingly, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will forego action on the bill.

The Committee takes this action with our mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration of H.R. 1367 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation. Further, I request your support for the appointment of conferees from the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform during any House-Senate conference convened on this or related legislation.

Finally, I would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the bill report filed by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, as well as in the Congressional Record during floor consideration, to memorialize our understanding.

Sincerely,

JASON CHAFFETZ,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,

Washington, DC, March 10, 2017.

Hon. JASON CHAFFETZ,

Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN CHAFFETZ: In reference to your letter on March 10, 2017, I write to confirm our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 1367, to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and for other purposes.

I appreciate the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's waiver of consideration of provisions under its jurisdiction and its subject matter as specified in your letter. I acknowledge that the waiver was granted only to expedite floor consideration of H.R. 1367 and does not in any way waive or diminish the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's jurisdictional interests over this or similar legislation. I will support a request from the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform for appointment to any House-Senate conference on HR. 1367. Finally, I will also support your request to include a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter in the Congressional Record during floor consideration.

Thank you for your attention and assistance in this matter. Sincerely,

Sincerely,

DAVID P. ROE, M.D.,
Chairman.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1367. I would like to thank the gentleman from Ohio, first of all, as an incredibly important Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, a doctor himself and, as important, a colonel in the United States Army and the United States Army Reserve. An incredible insight into the very issues we are addressing and, I think, bringing this bill right now, we had a very good debate on fixing the VA, moving them in the right direction. And this piece of legislation is incredibly spot-on about another piece of that accountability.

Dr. WENSTRUP's bill will help the VA better understand its staffing shortages, and I think this is important. We all say 45,000 openings or whatever; it is important for us to know, do we need to hire all 45,000 of those; which ones are critical; which ones can be done faster. So that piece is common sense.

It develops an executive management fellowship program that will allow the VA to send its leaders to the private sector to learn best practices and vice versa; again, incredibly smart, welcome change.

It will allow the VA to develop technical advancements, so employees who are in a specific field can advance in title and salary, without moving to a management role.

Quality hiring, training, and retention starts with a good HR department. This legislation will provide critical research into best HR practice and then provide the training to VA HR managers. These provisions, along with other hiring authorities, will help the VA get the right people in the door.

Currently, as the gentleman said, the process is slow, cumbersome, and, quite honestly, I think it just burns people out before they get there. And these are really dedicated folks who want to serve.

I have a gentleman I have become acquainted with who is a nationally renowned cardiac surgeon who left a very lucrative private practice to go to the VA after his son was wounded in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and chose to do his part by going back into the VA system.

He mentioned how cumbersome it was. He mentioned some of the bureaucratic troubles that he had, and all he wanted to do was bring an incredible skill set to serve those who served us; and Mr. WENSTRUP's bill does exactly that.

I encourage all Members to support this legislation, and ask that consideration in support of the amendments be brought forward, be considered. Each of these amendments will improve on a really good piece of legislation, improve the Secretary's ability to re-

cruit, train, and retain a quality workforce.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to take a second here to thank the ranking member for his hard work and putting forth many of the ideas that are in this bill and working with us, and thank him for his service to our country in the military and the high rank that he achieved, and bringing those experiences to us.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ).

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank, certainly, Dr. WENSTRUP, for bringing forward this bill, and also the ranking member here for good bipartisan work.

1978 was a good year. I was playing soccer at the AYSO as a young, 11-year-old kid. It was also a good year because that was the last time the civil service had a total revamp of its system. It has been that long since civil service has had this type of reform, and we are looking, on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, to take what is being done here in a good, bipartisan way, and try to institute some of these good best practices into the broader Federal Government.

The current hiring process is far too long and far too complex. We want to ensure the Federal Government remains a competitive employment option. We also want to make sure, particularly at the VA, that the department has the necessary data to make smart hiring decisions and ensure important positions are filled.

This bill will allow technical experts to earn promotions without having to necessarily go into the management track, which is very important. For some of the skill sets, you don't have to be in management if you are providing a skill that is so imperative to making sure we take care of our veterans.

The bill also allows for a fast-tracked reemployment of former VA employees who have a proven record of success at the agency. We get some people trained up, maybe they go and do something else, we ought to give the people priorities in coming back as well, to make sure that we have the most qualified Federal workers who are taking care of the people who have taken care of us. They did the heavy lifting for this country, and they deserve better, and we can do better by them. A big part of that would be passing this bill, H.R. 1367.

So, again, I want to thank Mr. WENSTRUP for his leadership. I am glad this is moving forward, and I stand in support of the bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, before I yield to the gentleman from Florida, I would like to point out, as a new Member bringing new vitality and new blood to this, how encouraging it is, both to me and, I would hope, to his constituents. Seeking out ways to

serve veterans, coming to try and work on legislation in a bipartisan manner speaks volumes for his commitment.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SOTO).

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Chairman, we send our servicemen and -women overseas in harm's way to protect our country because we know that freedom isn't free. So it is fundamental, as we, with such vigor, ask them to go to the battlefield, that we protect them when they are off the battlefield. And it is fundamental that, when they return, they have a world-class hospital system.

Now, today we begin consideration of H.R. 1367, which is exciting because it is a bipartisan bill to improve the VA's authority to hire, train, and retain physicians and other critical staff in the Veterans Health Administration.

Over the last 5 years, we have seen more than 2 million veterans enroll in the VA healthcare system, and we believe—both parties believe that nothing should stand in the way of any veteran having confidence in and access to care and benefits they earned and deserve.

I represent the central Florida area, and we are so honored to have a brand new Orlando VA, in a high-growth area, and the need is great. I was also honored to be able to have an office right across the street from the VA hospital that we just opened up last week, to be in proximity and to help our veterans.

But I can tell you, having met with some of our veterans already, we are looking at 3- to 6-month waits, even in a new facility.

A gentleman, who I will refer to as Mr. Smith so that I don't divulge his personal information, came to me yesterday, and he had issues with a podiatrist. He was not able to see them over the next couple of weeks. And in his goat farm in my district, he is unable to pursue his gainful employment, and we are trying to get him in over the next 2 weeks, but it could be 3 to 4 weeks.

So we need to stand together to restore trust and accountability and fill these positions. And so I applaud both parties, and I am excited for the Veterans' Affairs Committee to take this bold action to recruit and retain the most talented workforce, which is well-needed to provide quality and timely medical care for our Nation's veterans, for those in central Florida, Florida, and beyond.

□ 1830

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chair, before I reserve the balance of my time, I would like to point out to the gentleman from Florida that he has a podiatrist right here in Dr. WENSTRUP, so we can just solve the problem as we stand.

I reserve the balance of my time.
Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. POLIQUIN), who has been a very vocal supporter of our veterans every step of the way.

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Chair, I would like to point out for the RECORD that

both Mr. WALZ and Mr. WENSTRUP are both veterans, and we are so grateful for their service to our country in so many different ways.

Mr. Chair, it was our first commander-in-chief, George Washington, who said, and I paraphrase, that we can never expect young men and women to rise to the occasion to fight for our country and for our freedom unless we take care of those who have already sacrificed on the battlefield. So the wonderful thing about serving on the Committee for Veterans Affairs, Mr. Chair, is that it is completely bipartisan.

This is all about our veterans. We just love them in the State of Maine—66,000 veterans strong in our Second District of Maine, Mr. Chair. We have one of the highest percentages of our population that are veterans in the country, and we are very, very proud of that.

I must say that, in my dealings with Togus—which is, by the way, Mr. Chair, the first military hospital in the country. It is about 150 years old now. They set up to take care of our Civil War veterans about 150 years ago.

In any event, in talking with the folks at Togus, they made it very clear to me, Mr. Chair, that one of their biggest problems they have, and it is ongoing, is: How do we hire quickly and retain the best quality doctors, nurses, and medical technicians to care for our heroes?

That is why I am so excited and grateful for this opportunity to vote for H.R. 1367, because it helps solve one of these problems. It removes red tape in the hiring process. It streamlines the hiring process.

The Veterans Administration has about 360,000 employees, so it is a very large organization. When that happens, of course, you need to deal with administrative burdens and red tape and what have you.

So I am encouraging all of my fellow colleagues here, Republicans and Democrats, to make sure they vote for this bill, H.R. 1367, because our best fought for us, Mr. Chair, our best fought for us. It is time that our best take care of those who fought for us.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I have no further speakers and will be prepared to close after the gentleman is done.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 1367, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chair, I can't thank the gentleman enough—smart legislation combining many good ideas, willingness to incorporate those best practices, and then, I think, forcing VA to start moving in that direction.

This is an example, I think, of where the VA is at. And while we may disagree, and you saw a little bit of it today, it is not because there is any disagreement on what the final outcome is.

Dr. WENSTRUP's bill is smart. It will improve care; it will get good people in the VA; it will retain them; and it will improve HR practices to make sure that happens.

I encourage my colleagues to support the bill and some of the amendments that will work to improve upon a very good piece of legislation.

Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. POLIQUIN) having assumed the chair, Mr. BUDD, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF LOUISE HOPKINS UNDERWOOD

(Mr. ARRINGTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life and legacy of Louise Hopkins Underwood, a west Texas icon who passed away Tuesday, March 7, at the age of 97.

Mrs. Underwood was known as a charismatic woman with a sharp sense of humor. A woman loved by all, she was gracious, she was generous, and she was inspirational.

Mrs. Underwood was the mother of six and a pioneer in her quest to promote a passion for the arts and a stronger sense of community on the south plains.

Our region, which has a rich history better known for farming and ranching, is now also known for the arts, thanks to Mrs. Underwood.

Ecclesiastes 7:1 says:

A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.

Thank you, Mrs. Underwood. Thank you for your fragrant life and for leaving a legacy of a brighter, more colorful west Texas.

God bless the Underwood family.

CONDEMNING HEALTHCARE BILL

(Mr. GOTTHEIMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out against the healthcare bill that is currently making its way through the House. It is an attack on seniors that will raise New Jersey taxes, and I refuse to sit idly by.

First, it includes a premium senior tax that would make older Americans

pay five times more for their health care.

Second, the plan before Congress takes aim at long-term care to support the elderly and disabled and could ultimately throw seniors out of nursing homes. Three out of five nursing home residents in New Jersey rely on Medicaid to access long-term care.

Finally, it is not only seniors who would be hurt. This bill is a new tax on all New Jersey residents. It cuts Medicaid and leaves the State holding the bag for other States, and it puts additional costs on New Jersey to confront healthcare challenges like the opioid crisis sweeping our State.

We need a bipartisan fix to the Affordable Care Act. This plan does just the opposite. I am ready to sit at the table with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents to come up with a real fix.

BILLIONAIRE'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUDD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, this evening I rise to speak on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and I believe some of my colleagues will be joining me, to talk about the budget that has just been released by this President.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that while it is being called a skinny budget, we call it the billionaire's budget. It is the same misguided, rambling, unfocused, bloated giveaway to rich and corporate interests that has been offered for years.

My belief is that a budget is a statement of our values. This budget ensures that the rich get richer at the cost of working people, the environment, and the future of our country.

Funding has been axed for nearly 20 agencies, from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In addition to elimination of these important agencies, the billionaire's budget guts funding for several other important agencies.

You can see here by this chart from The Washington Post exactly what is happening: the Environmental Protection Agency chopped by 31 percent; the State Department cut by 29 percent; Agriculture cut by 21 percent, the Labor Department by 21 percent.